



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Republicans | Ranking Member Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 3495: The IMPROVE Well-Being for Veterans' Act

Background:

Current data indicates that approximately 20 of our nation's veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and members of the National Guard and Reserve die by suicide every day. This has remained true since the late 1990's despite significant increases to funding, staffing, programs, and attention for suicide prevention and mental health care at and through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Only six of those 20 suicide deaths per day were among those who had sought VA care in the two years preceding their death. Suicide is often the result of a complex interaction of risk and protective factors at the individual, community, and societal levels and prevention requires a similarly broad-based effort.

The IMPROVE Well-being for Veterans Act would expand the reach of services aimed at preventing veterans' suicide by providing grants to entities that offer and coordinate suicide prevention services for veterans and their families. Because there is no single cause of suicide, the services authorized to be provided through the grant are designed to help address known risk factors and, ultimately, to get veterans on a path to a life of purpose. Those services include outreach, health assessments, treatment, therapy, medication management, peer support, and assistance obtaining VA benefits. This bill would also require VA to coordinate with national, regional, and local public and private entities – like veterans service organizations, community partners working in mental health and suicide prevention, and local law enforcement - to plan the design and implementation of the grant program.

The Message:

- The suicide crisis is a multi-faceted *national* crisis - not a veteran-specific one - and it is going to take a government and society wide effort to solve it.
- Because only six of the 20 servicemembers and veterans per day who are taking their lives are receiving healthcare services at VA, we must empower VA to work through community partners to reach those most in need.
- The IMPROVE Act would prevent veteran suicide by expanding the reach of VA's suicide prevention programs and increasing coordination among currently disparate community resources that serve a wide variety of veteran needs.